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CIA/PASS --- SEIB 98-291CX

Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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Wednesday, 16 December 1998

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AMERICAS

Mexico:

Government Wary of Renewed Chiapas Violence

Mexican authorities are concerned that the anniversaries of a peasant massacre by progovernment paramilitaries on 22 December or of the Zapatista revolt on 1 January will spark renewed hostilities,

Violence could result from a provocative act by the Zapatistas or the Chiapas State government,

— Alleged Zapatista supporters on Sunday ambushed government sympathizers in the conflict area, killing one and wounding several, according to Mexican press reports.

Chiapas Governor Albores last week announced that paramilitary groups would be granted amnesty if they disarmed. Zapatista sympathizers, who have long accused Albores of casting a blind eye toward the paramilitary groups, have dismissed the latest pledge as insincere.

The Zapatistas continue to send mixed signals on their intent to negotiate a peace settlement. Rebel leader Marcos last month publicly expressed his willingness to open talks and reach out to concerned congressional leaders.

— Other Zapatista spokesmen while meeting last month with congressional mediators, however, rebuffed an attempt by the Zedillo government to open direct negotiations.

The Zapatistas will concentrate on soliciting the support of like-minded nongovernmental organizations and on maintaining their area of control. they may dangle the possibility of peace talks to buy time until the election in 2000, when the more sympathetic opposition will have a chance to assume power.